Decline in Number of Persons going to Gulf Countries on Employment Visa

*427. DR. D. MASTHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have carried out any survey to ascertain the reasons for continuous drop in the number of people going to Gulf Countries on employment visa;

(b) whether Government are aware that some other Asian countries have started sending more people on employment visa to Gulf countries in the recent past;

(c) whether Government would take steps to help our people to go to Gulf countries on work-permit visa to earn more and more foreign exchange; and

(d) whether Government would coordinate with the embassies of Gulf countries to simplify the procedures of granting visa to remove difficulties faced by common man intending to go for work abroad?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) to (d) Although no official survey has been conducted, the number of Indian nationals going to the Gulf countries on employemnt visas does not appear to have declined, except in Oman, where official statistics published by the Government of Oman report a marginal decrease in the size of the Indian workforce in that country from 3.21 lakhs in 1994 to 3.00 lakhs in 1997. This trend is attributable essentially to the drive launched by the Government of Oman in recent years to replace expatriate workers, wherever possible, by Omanis. In some other countries like the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, the number of Indians being employed is believed to have actually increased in the last year.

While no precise information is readify available about the trend in migration to the Gulf States from other Asian countries. Indian nationals still constitute the largest proportion of the expatriate workforce in the Gulf region.

Government is in regular contact with the Governments of the Gulf countries with regard to the promotion and protection of the consular and employment interests of Indians migrating legally to these countries. All requisite consular assistance is being rendered by Government to Indian nationals desirous of obtaining gainful and legal employment abroad.

Techno-Economic clearance to Subarnarekha Barrage Project

*428. SHRI DEBABRATA BISWAS: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government accorded techno-economic clearance to the Subarnarekha Barrage Project for the construction of a barrage across the river Subarnarekha at Bashirghat in Midnapore district, West Bengal;

(b) whether an All-Party delegation of the West Bengal Assembly met Government and requested them to provide central assistance to fund the project; and

(c) whether any decision has since been taken in the matter and if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SOMPAL): (a) Subernarekha Barrage Project of West Bengal was approved by the Technical Advisory Committee on 27.1.1988 for Rs. 215.61 crores subject to environment and forest clearance from Ministry of Environment & Forests. Subsequently, Ministry of Environment and Forest has given environmental and forest clearance on 19.9.1994 and Planning Commission has accorded investment clearance on 15.3.1995.

(b) and (c) An All-Party Delegation of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly met the Union Government in 1996 and submitted a Memorandum for providing Additional Central Assistance for execution of Subernarekha Barrage Project of